DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 329 528 SP 032 918

AUTHOR Nortman, Michael L.
TITLE Student Teacher Attitudes and Attitude Change.
PUB DATE Feb 91
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (71st, New Orleans, LA, February 16-20, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Change; *Discipline; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Student Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

The major hypothesis of this study was that students will adopt more traditional beliefs during student teaching, that secondary student teachers will exhibit less support for progressive attitudes than their elementary counterparts before student teaching, and that the extent of secondary teachers' change toward the traditional position will be significantly greater. The study surveyed a sample of 205 students from 3 central Ohio universities. The major findings were that the educational beliefs of secondary student teachers were significantly more traditional than those of their elementary counterparts at both the pretest and posttest periods, and that the educational beliefs of secondary student teachers changed over time to a more traditional orientation while those of the elementary sample remained constant. A comparison of the posttest scores of both teaching groups demonstrated that secondary student teachers tended to respond more traditionally than their elementary counterparts on scale items related to the areas of positive feelings toward students, discipline, and the importance of affective educational goals. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED329528

STUDENT TEACHER ATTITUDES AND ATTITUDE CHANGE

Michael L. Nortman

Presented to

Association of Teacher Educators
71st Annual Meeting
New Orleans, LA
February 1991

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. L. Norton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 032 918

STUDENT TEACHER ATTITUDES AND ATTITUDE CHANGE

A central task of a teacher education program is to mold desirable attitudes (Howsam, Corrigan, Denemark & Nash, 1976). Since attitudes largely determine students' conceptions of effective teaching (Kerlinger & Pedhazur, 1967) and teachers' support for specific curricular or instructional practices (Callahan, 1980), the central importance of attitudes is apparent. If teacher educators are to instruct prospective teachers on desirable educational practices and the body of professional knowledge and expect that instruction will be translated into a more professional and informed educational system in action in the classrooms, it is imperative that students' acquisition of attitudes be clarified, particularly as they test their beliefs in the school setting. A convenient mode to study the impact of schools on student attitudes involves the student teaching component since student teaching is the most intensive exposure students have to the realistic school environment during their preparation period. It is the transitional phase of teacher education when students change from students to teachers.

Background

The student teaching component of the teacher preparation program often represents an abrupt departure from previous components since students, within a few weeks, identify themselves as teachers rather than students and focus their efforts and attention away from the university toward the realities of teaching and schools (Iannaccone, 1963). Anxious to

succeed and be accepted during this intensive, often stressful, period of their training, students seek to adapt to the daily expectations and overall educational approach of their placement schools. Therefore, the nature of the school setting, its expectations and educational philosophy, become more salient than at any time during professional training (Iannaccone & Button, 1964; Tabachnick, 1980).

However, the school setting often supports practices and underlying attitudes opposed to those advocated by the university. Consequently, student teachers are thrust into a dichotomy often described as a clash of the idealistic, liberal, professional orientation of the university with the practicality (realism), conservatism, and bureaucratization of schools. Many researchers have found that as prospective teachers experience this clash of ideologies, they tend to adopt school attitudes and practices which they rejected before student teaching (Hoy, 1977; Iannaccone & Button, 1964; Tabachnick, 1980). Therefore, as they increasingly view themselves as teachers rather than students, they will more likely perceive the viewpoints of practicing teachers as more conducive to their achievement of success and acceptance.

This "functionalist" or "bureaucratic socialization" model of attitude change supports the view that the conservative, bureaucratic school setting has an immediate and strong impact on students, possessing the potential to reshape their attitudes in a matter of days (Alvermann, 1981). Furthermore, according to Hoy (1968), "... few members can escape the formative influence of the values, expectations, incentives, and sanctions of ... [these] organization(s)" (p. 315). Therefore, when prospective teachers become immersed in the reality of schools during student teaching, they learn that their ideals are not adaptable to actual school conditions (Katz, 1968). As a result, they incorporate the norms and role

expectations of their cooperating teachers (Iannaccone, 1963; Iannaccone & Button, 1964) and the bureaucratic school setting (Willower, Eidell & Hoy, 1967).

However, researchers have provided alternative conceptions to the bureaucratic socialization model of student teacher attitude changes. For example, Lortie's (1975) research indicated that no underlying shift in attitudes occurs during student teaching. Instead, he claimed that students possess a "latent" conservatism which resurfaces once students leave the university to enter the school setting on a full-time basis. Therefore, according to Lortie, the university has not fundamentally influenced prospective teachers' conservative conceptions of teaching which they developed during the more than 16 years they spent as students observing teachers. In other words, Lortie believed that teachers' demonstrated conservative educational philosophy is "continuous" with conceptions developed before they entered a teacher education program.

Other researchers claim a lest deterministic, more interactive, interpretation of the development of student teacher attitudes than the socialization and continuity models cited above. (Lacey, 1977; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984) For example, Lacey's and Tabachnick and Zeichner's research found that students exhibit individualistic, proactive responses to bureaucratic pressures rather than merely passively incorporating the predominant organizational philosophy. Lacey described two proactive social strategies - "strategic compliance" and "strategic redefinition" - which are employed by student teachers as they encounter school practices which conflict with their educational beliefs. "Strategic compliance," the predominant student teacher reaction, involves compliance with teaching procedures while retaining personal reservations about them, while "strategic redefinition" refers to student teachers' ability to initiate change in schools.

Furthermore, Tabachnick and Zeichner (1984) and Tabachnick, Zeichner, Densmore, Adler and Egan (1982) emphasized the importance of focusing on student teacher "perspectives" rather than on broad teacher ideologies when assessing the impact of student teaching, characterizing the former as "theory in use" and the latter as "espoused theory." According to the authors, a study of perspectives involves a qualitative analysis of individual student responses throughout student teaching rather than an analysis of pre/post test group measures of central tendency. According to these researchers, perspective, unlike general teacher ideology, addresses the convergence of theory and practice by uncovering "the ways in which teachers think about their work (e.g. purposes and goals, conceptions of curriculum and children) and the ways in which they give meaning to these beliefs by actions in the classroom" (Tabachnick, et al, 1982, p. 2). Furthermore, the authors' research of student teacher perspectives differs from most studies based on the bureaucratic socialization model since it found that the impact of student teaching did not result in the homogenization of student teacher beliefs toward a predominant organizational philosophy. Instead, the authors found that individual students maintained their original unique perspectives throughout student teaching. Therefore, these researchers argue that the development of student teacher perspectives is continuous with prior conceptions brought to the experience, supporting Lortie's contentions. (Tabachnick and Zeichner, 1984)

Also, Walberg (1968) and Walberg, Metzner, Todd & Henry (1968), without refuting the validity of the bureaucratic socialization model of attitude change, examined the psycho-sociological impact of student teaching. Their studies found that students' professional self concept declined during practice teaching in response to a conflict between their personality needs to be emotionally close with children and the institutional role requirements to establish order and discipline by maintaining a "proper professional distance" from

their students. According to Walberg (1968), as practice teachers encounter the above psycho-sociological conflict, they develop "... feelings of abnegation and depreciation of self .... After [their] first experience in teaching, novices were expected to feel less confident, more distant from pupils, and less understanding and competent in the professional role of teacher" (p. 43).

Finally, Spindler (1959) examined the influence of disjunctive cultural value systems on prospective teachers, claiming that prospective teachers experience a "discontinuity" in their acculturation when they attend teacher preparation. According to Spindler, prospective teachers are generally drawn from the middle to lower middle class which supports a traditional ideology, while their teacher education program supports an emergent (progressive) orientation. Spindler argued that as students encounter these disjunctive value systems, they develop primarily maladaptive coping strategies. One such strategy is employed by students who, in reaction to a personal threat to their familiar, comfortable values, may overcompensate by more strongly clinging to the original traditional orientation. Spindler referred to individuals employing the first strategy as "reaffirmative traditionalists' and to those employing the latter strategy as "compensatory emergentists."

THE STUDY DESCRIBED

Research Hypotheses

The central purpose of this study is to measure student teachers' attitude changes during student teaching. The major hypothesis, based on the socialization model cited above, is that students will adopt more-traditional beliefs during student teaching. The study further hypothesizes that secondary student teachers will exhibit less support for progressive attitudes than their elementary counterparts before student teaching and that the extent of

their change toward the traditional position will be significantly greater. These hypotheses rely on research which demonstrates that secondary student teachers and teachers exhibit more traditional beliefs than their elementary counterparts (Hoy, 1977; Villeme, 1980; Goodlad, 1984). Finally, the study assumes that the cooperating schools in which students are placed, although different, exhibit common traditional patterns which conflict with practices advocated by the university (Goodlad, 1984).

An Operational Measure of Attitudes

The terms "attitude" and "belief" are often not will differentiated from one another (Sudman and Bradburn, 1987). this study uses the terms "attitude" and "belief" interchangeably to indicate student teachers' degree of support, along the progressive-traditional continuum, for a progressive or traditional teaching and learning process. The operational definition of students' educational beliefs or attitudes is their group mean score on the Educational Beliefs Inventory (EBI), a 44-item, 5-point Likert type attitude scale developed for this study (Nortman, 1989).

The EBI consists of a randomly ordered sequence of items, 24 of which represent a progressive position and 20 a traditional orientation. The 20 traditional statements are reverse scaled. The 5-point Likert scale responses range from (1) strongly agree to (5) strongly disagree. A low score corresponds to relative support for progressive beliefs and a high score to relative support for traditional beliefs.

The reliability of the EBI, based on the pretest sample of 205 students and employing Cronbach's Alpha, is .77. Construct validity is based on a comprehensive review and analysis of the literature regarding progressive and traditional practices of schools. The writings and research of Dewey (1902; 1916; 1938), Brubacher (1962), Goodlad (1979; 1984), and Cole (1972) provided most of the literature base for the development of the scale.

TABLE 1

Categories of the Educational Beliefs Inventory

Category 1:	The Importance of Personal Meaning and Personal Synthesis of Knowledge
Category 2:	The Importance of Affective Edcucational Goals
Category 3:	The Importance of Objective Measurement
Category 4:	The Importance of Individual Differences
Category 5:	The Importance of Internal Motivation
Category 6:	The Use of Adult Authority to Establish Discipline
Category 7:	The Importance of Positive Teacher Feelings Toward Students

Procedures

This study surveyed a sample of 205 students from three universities - Capital University, The Ohio State University and Ohio Wesleyan University - in the Columbus, Ohio, metropolitan area during the 1988-89 fall term. The students from these universities were aggregated into four groups: 67 elementary student teachers, 34 secondary student teachers, 29 elementary education majors and 75 secondary education majors enrolled in an introductory education course.

The study employed a nonequivalent control group quasi-experimental design with the experimental groups being elementary and secondary student teachers and the control groups consisting of elementary and secondary education majors. The dependent variable was the mean score on the Educational Beliefs Inventory (EBI). All four groups received a

pretest before the student teaching experience and a posttest at the completion of the student teaching period. The posttest sample consisted of 199 students, resulting in an attrition of six students.)

The research employed the SPSSX statistical package for all statistical procedures at the 0.05 level of significance. One-way ANOVAs were employed to evaluate the significance of differences at the pretest and posttest periods; t-tests were employed to assess the change over time for each student teaching group; and two-way ANOVAs were employed to compare the extent of the attitude change of the two student teaching groups and of each student teaching group and its respective control group.

Results

The analysis of student teachers' beliefs before and after student teaching revealed that elementary student teachers were moderately supportive of a progressive position during both time periods (means of 2.140 and 2.144, respectively) and that secondary student teachers' beliefs shifted from a mild moderate to mild level of support for the progressive orientation (means of 2.343 and 2.529, respectively). (Table 2)

An analysis of the pretest scores indicated no significant differences between the elementary and secondary student teachers and their respective control groups, (The means of the elementary and secondary control groups were 2.239 and 2.243, respectively.) but did find a significant difference between the elementary and secondary control groups. (Table 3)

Furthermore, the results of the analysis of the difference between elementary and secondary student teachers' beliefs at both the pretest and posttest periods supported the research hypothesis that secondary student teachers' attitudes would be significantly more traditional than those of elementary student teachers at both time periods (p.0001 and p.0000,

respectively). (Table 3) Also, an analysis of students' responses to individual scale items revealed that those items which most discriminated between the two groups involved attitudes related to positive teacher feelings toward students, discipline, and affective educational goals. In all of these belief areas, secondary student teachers' responses were significantly more traditional.

The hypothesis that student teachers' attitudes would change over time was not supported for elementary but was supported for secondary student teachers (p.941 and P.026, respectively). (Also, the attitudes of the control groups did not significantly change over time.) Furthermore, the extent of secondary student teachers' attitude change was found to be significantly greater than that of their control group (p.016). However, the hypotheses that the extent of the attitude change of secondary student teachers would be significantly greater than that of elementary student teachers was not supported by the findings (p.055). (Table 3)

TABLE 2

A Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Elementary and Secondary Student Teachers and Control Groups

Sample Group	Pretest Mean/Sd	Posttest Mean/Sd
Elementary Student Teachers	2.14/.321	2.14/.232
Secondary Student Teachers	2.34/.253	2.53/.399
Elementary Education Students	2.239/.278	2.18/.279
Secondary Education Students	2.413/.243	2.40/.274

TABLE 3

Tests of the Significance of the Difference of Mean Scores

T-test of Pretest and Posttest Scores Over Time for Each Student Teaching Group:

Elementary Student Teachers' Pretest and Posttest Scores = p.941

Secondary Student Teachers' Pretest and Posttest Scores = p.029

One-Way ANOVA of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Student Teaching Groups:

Comparison of Pretest Means of Student Teaching Groups = p.0001

Comparison of Posttest Means of Student Teaching Groups = p.0000

Two-Way ANOVA By Group and Time for Student Teaching and Control Groups:

Comparison of Elementary Student Teachers' and Control Group Scores = p .466

Comparison of Secondary Student Teachers' and Control Group Scores = p.016

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research suggest the existence of distinctive differences between the educational beliefs of elementary and secondary student teachers in the areas of discipline, affective educational goals, and positive feelings toward students. In all three areas, secondary student teachers' responses were more traditional, a finding consistent with Goodlad's (1984) research regarding the relatively greater emphasis placed on academics as grade levels increase ("academic primacy") over the personal/social realms as well as increased concern with discipline.

Also, the results of the research suggest that, in part, the differences between elementary and secondary student teachers stem from their attitudes before their entrance into the teacher preparation program. This conclusion is based on the finding that the attitudes of the elementary and secondary control groups, comprised of students in the initial stages of professional training, were significantly different in a manner similar to the difference exhibited by the student teaching groups.

The practical implications of the demonstrated attitude change of secondary student teachers should be viewed as small but significant, in part, because the extent of their change was significantly greater (p.016) than that of a control group of similar students. Also, the small lack of statistical difference (0.055) between the extent of the attitude change between elementary and secondary student teachers suggests that observations over longer time periods may produce different results.

However, the beliefs of elementary student teachers, unlike their secondary counterparts, remained virtually unchanged. A possible explanation for this lack of a change in the attitudes of elementary student teachers is that the broad array of attitudes measured by the EBI may be more stable and more resistant to bureaucratic pressures for prospective, and

possibly experience, elementary teachers. Therefore, the attitudes measured by the EBI may tap underlying general values or long range perspectives which possibly are considerably more stable than the short term perspectives described by researchers such as Becker, Geer, Hughes and Stauss (1961). Furthermore, this finding has implications for practice, since Becker, et al, argued that when students are afforded suitable placements, their long range, generally idealistic, perspectives become immediate short term perspectives guiding behavior.

Conclusions

The results suggest areas for further study. The findings related to the distinctive differences between elementary and secondary student teachers suggest the need to analyze whether these differences exist before students begin study in their specialization area, occur as a result of their training or are most influenced by school environments. Such an analysis should serve to help educators identify and understand the source and stability of differences between the student teaching groups and to clarify those attitudes which need to be addressed by the training program.

Also, this study should be duplicated in a variety of settings to assess the influence of specific cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds on the development of educational attitudes. Efforts to link educational beliefs with cultural backgrounds and to assess the changes in attitudes during the preparation program will provide needed information about the influence of the program on culturally influenced attitudes, such as those related to motivation, discipline and individual differences.

Finally, teacher preparation programs must delineate those attitudes deemed desirable. However, the systematic delineation of desirable attitudes should not represent a

final statement or philosophy but rather a statement of an interrelated set of attitudes which are continuously scrutinized by faculty and students.

REFERENCES

Alvermann, D. E. (1981). The possible values of dissonance in student teaching experiences. Journal of Teacher Education, 32, 24-25.

Becker, H. S., Geer, B., Hughes, E. C. & Strauss, A. L. (1961). Boys in white. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Brubacher, J. S. (1962). Modern philosophies of education (3rd. ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Callahan, R. (1980). A study of teacher candidates' attitudes. College Student Journal, 14, 167-175.

Cole, H. P. (1972). Process education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

Dewey, J. (1902). The child and the curriculum. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Dewey, J., (1916). Democracy and education. New York: Macmillan Company.

Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and education. New York: Collier Books.

Goodlad, J. (1979). What schools are for. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Goodlad, J., (1984). A place called school. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hoy, W. K. (1968). The influence of experience on the beginning teacher. The School Review, 76, 312-323.

Hoy, W. K. & Rees, R. (1977). The bureaucratic socialization of student teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 28, 23-26.

Howsam, R. B., Corrigan, D. C. , Denemark, G. W., & Nash, R. J. (1976). Educating a profession. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. (ED 117 053)

Iannaccone, L. (1963). Student teaching: A transitional stage in the making of a teacher. Theory Into Practice, 2, 73-80.

Iannaccone & Button (1964, July). Functions of student teaching, attitude formation, and initiation in elementary student teaching. St. Louis: Washington University. (ED 003 011)

Katz, F. E. (1968, December). Rites of passage and teacher training processes. Buffalo: State University of New York. (ED 028 125)

Kerlinger, F. & Pedhazur, E. (1967). Educational attitudes and perceptions of desirable traits of teachers. New York: Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting. (ED 011 868)

Nortman, M. L. (1989). The effect of the student teaching experience on educational attitudes (Doctoral dissertation, the Ohio State University, 1989). Dissertation Abstracts International, 50, 1279A.

Spindler, G. D. (1959). The transmission of American culture. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Sudman, S., & Bradburn, N. M. (1987). Asking questions. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Tabachnick, B. R. (1980) Intern-teacher roles: Illusion, disillusion and reality. Journal of Education, 162, 122-137.

Tabachnick, B. R. & Zeichner, K. M. (1984). The impact of the student teaching experience on the development of teacher perspectives. Journal of Teacher Education, 35, 28-36.

Tabachnick, B. R. & Zeichner, K. M., Densmore, K., Adler, S. & Egan, K. (1982). The impact of the student teaching experience on the development of teacher perspectives. New York: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. (ED 218 251)

Villeme, M. G. (1980). The relation of teacher attitude to major, employment status, teaching level, and satisfaction with teaching for first-year teachers. Humanist Educator, 19, 85-90.

Walberg, H. J., Metzner, S., Todd, R. M. & Henry, P. M. (1968). Effects of tutoring and practice teaching on self-concept and attitudes in education students. Journal of Teacher Education, 19, 283-291.

Willower, D. J., Eidell, T. L., & Hoy, W. K. (1967). The school and pupil control ideology. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University.